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ABSTRACT

Project Head Start has recently expanded into elementary schools through the National Head Start/Public School Transition Project (NTP), a school-based intervention program designed to improve outcomes for at-risk students. The SDTP (South Dakota site of NTP) is attempting to improve life chances for children by improving home and school environments. An SDTP ethnographic study was designed to provide the descriptive data needed to enrich quantitative analysis in the overall NTP evaluation (which is testing the hypothesis that providing continuous comprehensive services to Head Start children will maintain and enhance early benefits attained by children and families). A literature review was conducted on areas of: (1) comprehensive services; (2) social services; (3) education, including parent education and social networks; (4) health; (5) parent involvement; and (6) home/school coordinators. Data were gathered through participant observations, interviews, and analysis of family services coordinator (FSC) journals. Tentative results, analyzed in terms of the changing and increasing role of FSCs, included: (1) effect of milk break; (2) effect of hands-on food activity; (3) effect of SDTP on children's health; (4) effect of SDTP on curriculum; (5) children's transition activities; (6) parent involvement; and (7) improved home/school communication. The study concluded that children and families at SDTP sites have benefited from successful transition project implementation. Contains 51 references. (BGC)

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Providing Head Start-like Services from Kindergarten Through the Third Grade: The Role of Family Service Coordinators

A Paper Presented to
Head Start's Third National Research Conference
Washington, DC
June 20-23, 1996

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Introduction

American education is the focus of considerable national debate as global economic competition rises and the numbers of at-risk students increase. At-risk learners have been identified in the literature as having a high probability of academic failure and eventually dropping out of school (Ross, Smith, Casey, & Slavin, 1995). America fears that the educational system is not producing members capable of becoming part of a competitive workforce. Goal two of The National Education Goals 2000 addressed the intent to increase the number of high school graduates (Data for the National Education Goals Report Vol.2, 1994). At the present, 12 per cent of all adolescents will not complete high school (Data for the National Education Goals Report Vol.2, 1994).

The most prominent characteristics of students at-risk has been identified in the literature as poverty (Bianchi, 1984; Campbell & Ramey, 1995; Chafel, 1990; Gleason, 1993; Horacek, Ramey, Campbell, Hoffmann, & Fletcher, 1987; Ross et al., 1995; Rush, 1992; Vacha & McLaughlin, 1992; Vickers, 1994; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). The numbers of students fitting the at-risk profile are increasing. According to Chafel, society needs to intervene early in the lives of children at-risk (1990). Child

poverty rates have been rising steadily from 15.7% in 1978 to 19.2% in 1988 (Chafel, 1990). According to Gleason (1993) and Zigler and Muenchow (1992), the comprehensive program of the Head Start/Transition Project may be an efficient use of government funding for improving the chances for at-risk children.

Project Description

The Head Start experience has recently been expanded into elementary schools through implementation of the National Head Start/Public School Transition Demonstration Project (NTP). The NTP is a comprehensive school-based intervention program designed to improve the outcome for students at-risk. The NTP was funded in 1991 and implemented in 1992 to provide services to children in kindergarten at thirty-one different sites in the United States.

One-half of the children and families in each of the thirty-one sites receive NTP services. The other half serve as comparison children and families. A second cohort of kindergarten children was added in the fall of 1993. The NTP is testing the hypothesis that providing continuous comprehensive services to Head Start children will maintain and enhance the early benefits attained by the children and their families (Kennedy, 1993). The NTP will continue to provide services to the children through their third grade year.

The comprehensive services are provided at the South Dakota site (SDTP) by family service coordinators (FSCs) to demonstration children and their families. The component areas

of the comprehensive services are (1) social services, (2) health, (3) education, and (4) parent involvement. The FSCs are very much central to SDTP implementation in their service as the liaison between state agencies, community agencies, schools, and parents. The FCSs make routine home visits and work directly with parents in an effort to improve home-school communication, provide the parents with educational resources, and help parents gain access to needed social services. An additional adult education component addresses adult literacy needs and parent training. Building trust on the part of the parents is an important element in developing partnerships between families and schools (Lueder, 1989).

Another facet of the SDTP educational component is the incorporation of Developmentally Appropriate Practices into the classrooms. Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAPs) are classroom instruction methods which recognize the, "...need for teachers to teach the whole child-physical, social, emotional, and cognitive dimensions-within an integrated curriculum in which children are engaged in active, rather than passive, activities (McIntyre, 1995, p.145)." Other components of DAPs include: involving children in social interaction around meaningful relevant topics of interest to the children, classroom grouping (often achieved by the children themselves) across ability levels, and testing through comparisons of students' work with their previous work (McIntyre, 1995; Wakefield, 1993). A recent position statement from the National Association for the

Education of Young Children (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 1988) has recommended DAPs for children ages five through eight.

Utilization of DAPs by SDTP schools continues through the encouragement of FSCs and SDTP sponsored teacher training. The teachers and principals from SDTP demonstration schools are invited by the SDTP each summer to attend a week long High Scope training workshop. Workshop attendance is voluntary and workshop fees are paid by the SDTP. Graduate credit for the workshop can be received by teachers who comply with the guidelines and write a paper. In addition, all the teachers involved in the SDTP received a $250 stipend that was used for purchases of classroom supplies during the 1994-1995 school year.

Literature Review

One avenue for understanding the role of family service coordinators is to review related literature on comprehensive services. As stated earlier, the comprehensive services in the SDTP are in the areas of social services, education, health, and parent involvement. Identifying the link utilized in providing the services can also be a useful dimension for the study of comprehensive services.

Comprehensive Services

The literature strongly suggested that schools change policies and practices to address the needs of at-risk students (Gleason, 1993; Vacha & McLaughlin, 1992; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). Gleason suggested that schools add the parent involvement

and comprehensive service components of Head Start (1993). Stallings (1995) encouraged schools to address the plight of at-risk students by providing comprehensive school-linked services for children. Vacha and McLauglin recommended a number of specific changes in school policies: (1) schools should compensate low-income families by providing home resources such as access to reference books and tutoring programs; (2) schools should reduce the barriers to parent involvement such as parents' discomfort in the school setting and lack of information about the schools; (3) schools should understand that low-income parents are not going to be as involved with their children's education, and the schools should compensate by increasing the monitoring of the students through peer tutoring programs or computers (1992).

Social Services. The literature has suggested that connecting parents to needed social services has an empowering effect on parents (Gleason, 1993; Pizzo, 1993; Stallings, 1995; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992; Zigler & Styfco, 1993). Pizzo described parent empowerment as, "the acquisition (or reacquisition) and use of the resources that parents need to nurture and protect children, including adequate income, goods, and services (e.g., housing, medical care); a supportive network of other adults; time; legal authority; and personal skills and attributes ... (1993, p. 9)." Head Start has a long history of parent empowerment concerns (Gleason, 1993; National Head Start Association, 1990; Pizzo, 1993; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992; Zigler &

Styfco, 1993). Head Start empowers parents economically and psychologically through their family support programs (Gleason, 1993; National Head Start Association, 1990; Pizzo, 1993; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992; Zigler & Styfco, 1993).

Education. Parent education is an important and useful adult education experience. According to Allen (1996a) parent education experiences can help parents change parenting practices and develop parents' social networks. Parenting styles identified in the literature as authoritarian and permissive have been shown to have a negative effect on children's academic achievement and mental health (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; McLeod & Shanahan, 1993; Vacha & McLaughlin, 1992; Vickers, 1994). Parent's social networks have been identified in the literature as important in empowering parents (Allen, 1996a; Cataldo, 1987; Pizzo, 1993). The social networks developed through parent educational experiences have helped parents understand that "they are not the only ones" who have children who misbehave and have helped parents "become more confident" in their parenting practices (Allen, 1996a).

Health. The health of our nation's children is in serious jeopardy. According to Stallings (1995, p. 4), "At least one in six children has no health care at all, only slightly more than half of U.S. preschoolers have been immunized, and on any given night, at least 100,00 children are homeless." Another disheartening statistic noted by Stallings was that, "nearly a quarter of U.S. children are poor and live in families that

cannot support their basic needs (1995, p. 4)." Chafel added, "Of seven industrialize countries, the United States has the highest percentage of children severely poor ... (1990, p. 241)." Chafel stressed the relationship between children's poverty and compromised development. Chafel stated that economically disadvantaged children enter school already damaged and "perform worse than more privileged children on nearly every measure of educational attainment (1990, p. 241)." Gleason (1993) and Stallings (1995) addressed the relationship between poverty, children's health, and performance in school. Gleason said, "The concepts are simple. Children can't learn if they're hungry or sick (1993, p.31)."

Parent Involvement. An important intervention strategy in the lives of at-risk children has been identified in the literature as parent involvement (Eberhard, 1989; Gleason, 1993; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; King, 1994; Levin, 1987; Purkey & Smith, 1985; Rush, 1992; Vacha & McLaughlin, 1992; Vickers, 1994; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). Parents' involvement in their children's education has been identified in educational and effective schools research as an important predictor of the educational success of students (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Purkey & Smith, 1985; Vacha & McLaughlin, 1992). Brosz identified different forms that parent participation can take in the school as "parent as audience," "parent as communicator," "parent as advocate or advisor," and "parent as volunteer and/or teacher" (1988). Waugh, Bireley, Webb, and Graham identified the characteristics

of parents who successfully reared gifted children and found that the parents were active participants in their children's education (1993). Grolnick and Ryan reported that children who's mothers were more involved in education were both better adjusted, according to teachers, and had higher achievement levels (1989).

Brosz identified attitudes of teachers and administrators as barriers to effective parent participation (1988). Brosz suggested that administrators and teachers may be afraid that parent involvement may interfere with the rights and duties of school personnel or the presence of parents may be disruptive to the class (1988).

Home/school Coordinators

The literature identified home-school coordinators as an important family-school community link (Davis, 1989; Lueder, 1989; Stallings, 1995; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992; Zigler & Styfco, 1993). Family-school communication is an important factor in the academic success of children (Bianchi, 1984; Vickers, 1994). Research has noted that the community-school link provided by home/school coordinators should greatly improve the life chances of children (Chafel, 1990; Gleason, 1993; Rush, 1992; Zigler and Muenchow, 1992).

Lueder reported the results of a state's successful pilot project that was designed to increase parent involvement through the use of home/school coordinators (1989). The coordinators made routine home visits to give parents materials for helping

their children in school and to develop trust between the family and school. Lueder stated that building trust was important, because most parents of at-risk children have experienced negative educational experiences (1989).

Methodology

The main purpose of the SDTP ethnographic study is to provide descriptive data necessary to explain the results of the quantitative analysis described in the overall NTP evaluation plan. The SDTP ethnographic study also serves to fill in research gaps not covered by the NTP Core Data Set; gaps include descriptions of the services provided by FSCs and the perceived effect of the services by SDTP participants. A focus on the FSC culture will provide a comprehensive picture of the over-all effect of the SDTP, since FSCs interact with all SDTP participants, community agencies, and schools.

Newhouse suggested that researchers utilize observation as a research methodology when examining schools in rural communities (1981). Since schools and rural communities are closely intertwined, observation has the least amount of negative effect on the communities and schools (Newhouse, 1981). Knapp (1995) suggested that research on comprehensive collaborative services for children and families should provide thick descriptions of the service arrangements at the point of service delivery and should demonstrate the impact at both the individual and organizational level. In the case of the SDTP, service delivery is through FSCs.

The holistic approach of ethnography is viewed as important in understanding the interactions of the people within social institutions and in the larger context of the communities (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1992; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Spradley, 1979, 1980). Learning the behaviors and beliefs of community members and school personnel will provide a deeper description of the program-community-school relationship. An understanding of the unique cultural framework of each community as well as the FSC culture will aid in identifying program failures and successes. An identification of the strategies utilized by FSC during program implementation and community-school-family-agency coordination will add depth to the quantified data collection of the larger national study.

Research Questions

The developing theory and position of the SDTP ethnographic study as part of a larger study guide research methods and data collection procedures. The ethnographic study as part of the NTP has specific objectives. The present study addressed two of the seven objectives proposed by the NTP Core Data Set. The two general research questions based on those objectives are as follows:

(1). What have been the barriers and difficulties encountered in implementing the NTP at the local level?

(2). What are the characteristics of the NTP at the local level which are associated with more successful implementation?

What aspects of implementation are related to higher degrees of continuous successful transitions?

The SDTP ethnographic study also is guided by a number of objectives and questions that address the objectives. The questions limit the ethnographic study but also serve to guide the researcher in the choice of key informants. The questions are general enough to allow the researcher the flexibility required of an ethnographic study. The questions proposed for the local study include:

(1). What are the primary services provided by the family service coordinators to families and schools?

(2). What is the perceived effect of these services by the family service coordinators to families and schools?

(3). What changes, if any, should be made in the services or the way they are provided to improve SDTP implementation?

Data Collection

Data collection methods remain flexible and respond to the developing theory. At present data are gathered in four ways: participant observations, formal and spontaneous interviews, analysis of school and community documents, and analysis of family FSC journals.

Field notes. Sketchy notes are taken during convenient times in the field. Notes are never taken during home visits, because the observer feels it would be distracting and take away from the conversational quality of the visit. Some parents feel comfortable enough in the presence of the observer to discuss

private information with the family service coordinators. It is doubtful that the parents would feel the same level of comfort if their conversations were being recorded.

Note taking is also not done during school visits for a number of reasons. The observer is very often an active participant in the classroom food activities that are presented by the family service coordinators. Note taking and preparing food at the same time are impossible. The observer attempted to take notes once during a classroom observation, but quickly stopped when the students because distracted. A central goal of the observer is to be as unobtrusive in the classrooms as possible.

The most convenient time for note taking in the field is when the observer rides in the car with family service coordinators. A considerable amount of time is spent driving between home visits, schools, and community agencies due to the sparse population of the SDTP site. The privacy of the car permits either in-depth interviewing of the family service coordinators or note taking of previously observed situations. The presence of the family service coordinators allows the observer the opportunity to check accuracy of observations.

The field notes are expanded to include descriptions, observations, and personal reflections after the observer returns home. The field notes are then converted into word processing documents and later into ASCII files for transfer into the HyperResearch computer program (Researchware, Inc., 1994).

Participant observations. Participant observations are conducted by the researcher "shadowing" the FSCs through-out the coordinators' work days. Participant observations are conducted only in SDTP demonstration schools and communities and are not conducted in SDTP comparison schools and communities. The participant observations were conducted during the elementary school terms in 1993-1994, 1994-1995, and 1995-1996, and will continue through the 1996-1997 school terms. The ethnographer spends on the average of two days per week in the field conducting both participant and non-participant observations. Participant observations are scheduled in advance and are rarely unannounced, in spite of recommendations by the literature (Agar, 1986; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Fetterman, 1989; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spradley, 1979, 1980). It would be impossible to observe the family service coordinators any other way, since FSCs visit about thirty to fifty families each month, community agencies, and schools. The sparsely populated communities increase the necessity of accompanying rather than trying to find FSCs. The entire area covered by the ethnographer is about 6000 square miles, and it is not unusual for the ethnographer to travel 250 miles in one day. The time spent in the FSCs' cars traveling between homes, agencies, and institutions allows the researcher time to build rapport with the FSCs and provides the opportunity for spontaneous, private interviews. Unscheduled observations are limited to impromptu visits at the schools during the time spent "shadowing" the

family service coordinators. Restricting observations to scheduled visits prevents the researcher from knowing a "typical day" in the life of a family service coordinator, and must be considered a limitation of the study.

Interviews. The formal interviews were conducted in the spring of the following years: 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996. Formal interviews will also be scheduled in the springtime of 1997. Additional interviews of parents who had attended SDTP parenting classes were conducted in the fall of 1996. Spontaneous interviews occur during participant observations and serve to clarify questions the ethnographer has about the school, community, or family service coordinator behaviors or beliefs.

Interviews are recorded in several ways: (1) structured interviews are entered into interview protocols recorded in a word processing program, (2) spontaneous interviews are hand written in the field then later entered into a word processing program, and (3) in-depth interviews of parents were gathered by tape recording and then entered into a word processing program. Interviews documents are later converted into ASCII files, as are the field observations, for transfer into the HyperResearch qualitative data management program (Researchware, Inc., 1994).

Analysis of FSC journals. The analysis of family service coordinator journals began in September of 1993 and is an ongoing part of the SDTP evaluation. The journals provide personal reflections of the family service coordinators on the problems, solutions, and effective strategies utilized by the FSCs. The

journals also provide the ethnographer with important in-sider information about the communities and their members.

Journal analyses contain considerably more steps than other data collection techniques. Steps involved in the analysis of FSC journals include: (1) family service coordinators hand-write their journals, (2) journals are transcribed into a word processing program, and (3) documents are converted into ASCII files for transfer into the HyperResearch qualitative data management program (Researchware, Inc., 1994).

Document analyses. The observer also collects the materials FSCs distribute to parents during home visits, materials the schools distribute to their families, and materials distributed by agencies. The document analyses are only cursory at this time and are not entered into HyperResearch (Researchware, Inc., 1994).

Validity. All interviews, participant observations, journal and document analyses, and data analysis are conducted and documented by a single individual. A triangulation of data collection procedures helps cross-check the accuracy of data, enhances the scope, density, and clarity of constructs developed during the course of the fieldwork, and corrects biases that occur when there is only one observer (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). The multi-disciplinary backgrounds of the co-authors enrich the ethnographer's interpretations of the data and serve to check the biases of the ethnographer. The ethnographer also utilizes a bias check during data collection

that was suggested by the literature (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984; Spradley, 1979; Kirk & Miller, 1986). The bias check involves recording the ethnographer's feelings and assumptions in "observer comments." A journal has been utilized throughout the whole study which serves to document the ethnographer's thought processes during the data collection. The "observer comments' are part of the journal and help the ethnographer to know and understand the ethnographer's own perspectives, logic, and assumptions.

Data Sources

The SDTP site is comprised of six Transition site schools and five Comparison site schools. The geographical area is large and sparsely populated. There are primarily two ethnic groups - Caucasian and Native American. The total population in the nine communities involved in the SDTP is 34,780 (South Central Child Development [SCCD], 1996). Confidentiality of the research participants requires that communities and SDTP participants remain anonymous.

Interviews are systematically collected each spring from FSCs and comparison and SDTP principals, teachers, and parents. The number of subjects has varied each year as the SDTP has moved through the school systems. Spontaneous interviews of participants occur as the need arises. At the present, about 300 interviews have been conducted. Participant observations are conducted with all family service coordinators. At the present

time, there are nine family service coordinators. Journals of the family service coordinators are analyzed monthly.

Data Analysis

The researcher utilizes the Macintosh version of the computer program called HyperResearch for data management (Researchware, Inc., 1994). Data analysis is on going, but formal analysis occurs once yearly after collection of the spring interviews. The observer/ethnographer analyzes the data by following the HyperResearch computer program authors' suggestions of coding and categorizing and by following suggestions found in the literature (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Researchware, Inc., 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

HyperResearch is utilized because it allows data reduction thorough coding procedures and facilitates theory development through the use of bolean statements (Researchware, Inc., 1994). Since qualitative research is an inductive research procedure, it produces volumes of data. The use of a computer program facilitates organization of the data into manageable pieces of information. Retrieval of coded statements is easily accomplished and facilitates theory building for use in the final reports.

Results

The longitudinal data are still being collected, therefore results must be considered tentative. A description of the duties of FSCs will aid in understanding their role in the transformation of schools and the lives of families. In general,

most SDTP demonstration schools have utilized FSCs to some degree as links between the schools and families. The SDTP demonstration schools have changed in the following ways: increased the use of DAPs, involved parents more in the schools and in the educational experiences of their children, and developed transition plans for students in kindergarten through the third grade. Demonstration schools in the SDTP have gradually changed their pedagogical philosophy from simply the cognitive domain to educating the "whole child." The results section will provide data to answer the local research questions regarding the services provided by FSCs and the effect of the services. Quotations are from reports, raw materials, and papers written by Allen (1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1996b).

Services Delivered

The services FSCs have delivered include, "medical, dental, and educational information in the component areas, increased parent involvement in the classrooms... some families have received financial assistance through learning of available assistance programs," according to an interview in 1994 with a FSC. Other FSCs made similar statements during interviews in 1995 and 1996. A FSC stated in an interview in 1995, "...targeted the special needs of at-risk families and linked them with the services they needed."

The roles of FSCs and the services delivered by FSCs in 1995 seem to have mushroomed since 1993. In 1993 the FSCs limited their responses about services delivered to naming the Head Start

component areas and the liaison functions. By 1994, 1995, and 1996, however, the FSCs had mentioned services that extended beyond the Head Start component areas to "anything and everything that a family needs" from referral services and transportation to attending IEPs and testing children.

Effect of services. There is little agreement of family service coordinator responses as to what the most effective services are. One expects disagreement in that area since all communities are different and all families vary in their needs. The most effective services, according to FSC interviews in 1995 and 1996, were home visits and working with families to identify early problems in the family, free dental services, nutrition, referral system, resources, and the educational component. One family service coordinator interviewed in 1995 stated, "Depends on the family. For some families it may be the medical or dental, for some the information, and for others it may be just having someone to talk to." The divergence of opinions on most effective services in 1995 and 1996 (in comparison to 1993 and 1994) may be at least partially explained by the fact that FSCs know their families and their families' needs much better.

The most effective service noted by FSCs in 1993 interviews was the health component. During interviews in 1994, however, a number of different services were listed by each FSC as the most effective services. The health component, increased parent involvement in education, or depends on the family were the most frequently occurring responses in 1994.

Effect of milk break. FSCs were more positive about the effect of the milk break in interviews in 1995 and 1994 than they were in 1993. Comments from three different FSCs interviewed in 1995 included, (1) "Milk program is wonderful, I wish they would have continued it for kindergarten children... kids like it and it gives them something to look forward to... they're always hungry;" (2) "Good responses... teachers know the kids have something in their stomach... parents enjoy it too... parents who just move here or are not in the program say 'You guys are the ones that give the milk';" (3) "They have come to expect it... they really like it... the teachers have come to incorporate it into their day..."

Effect of hands-on food activity. FSCs were more positive about the effect of the food activity in interviews in 1994, 1995, and 1996 than they were in 1993. Comments from two different FSCs interviewed in 1995 included, (1) "Parents have told me that they did not realize their children could do so much (like using a knife and peeling carrots)... there is a lot of carry over into the home... parents have told me that they make stone soup every Saturday... we send the recipe home with the children, which gives the children more of a reminder and confidence when using the recipe... parents can see the recipe and are more apt to let the children make it;" (2) They [the children] have learned a lot... better attitude toward different foods (they always taste it) plus they have learned measurement, manners, working in a groups, the food groups, taking turns, and

get the recipe for each food activity to take home... so that gives them ownership... it makes it more special to them and gives a sense of responsibility... reinforces importance of reading directions too."

Effect of SDTP on children's health. As with the milk break and the food activity, FSCs were more positive about the effect of the SDTP during interviews in 1994, 1995, and 1996 than they were in 1993. The response of one FSC is similar to the responses of the other FSCs, "...positive... know there has been dental work done (one bill was $400, so that child had had that neglected for quite a while)... it has made people aware of the need for preventive dental and medical care."

SDTP Demonstration Schools

The demonstration schools in the SDTP have utilized the FSCs differently, have differed in the extent to which they have utilized FSCs, and have differed in changes to their curriculum. The FSCs, therefore, differ in their opinions of changes within their schools.

Principals at SDTP demonstration schools interviewed in 1993, 1995, and 1996 made remarks about FSC services that were similar to their remarks of 1994. Principals have utilized FSCs as liaisons and greatly appreciate the services delivered by FSCs. Teachers at SDTP demonstration schools that were interviewed in 1993, 1994, and 1995, listed more specific FSC services than the principals. Interviews of teachers in 1994 (Allen, 1994) included the following statements:

(1) The biggest help is in the home. She [FSC] can go right away if I have a concern or if not to the home she can contact them at work. (2) She [FSC] has helped in the room, gone to the homes for me, brought things to the home, taken things back, and brought kids to school. She's a great connection. (3) FSCs provided nutritional things, brought kids to school if they missed the bus, and is a contact person if I need the parent. It is nice to know that if you need someone from home you have someone you can count on to help. (4) She [FSC] has reported back to me about a certain parent and the home situation. One student wasn't coming to school on time. She went to the home and found out that the parent was single parent, her car wouldn't start, and she had trouble getting the child to school. I was a little more understanding of the situation after that. (5) She [FSC] provides communication. She has come to me with parent concerns - like one didn't understand inventive spelling, so I addressed that in the next newsletter. (6) [FSC] She has made all the contacts for the big brother of my student. That is helpful because I don't have to track people down. (7) She [FSC] has been a personal confidant. I can tell her things or concerns about a family. If I don't have any proof on things I can talk to her about it. She's kind of a sounding board, plus I value her opinion. (8) They [FSCs] actually do anything we ask if they have the time.

Effect of SDTP on curriculum. Schools and classrooms in the schools vary in degree of curriculum change. FSCs' interview responses in 1995 varied from, "Definitely more DAP being done in these classrooms either because of the High Scope training or our interventions in the room," to "First grade is doing more hands-on learning. ...stuck behind the door because curriculum has to be approved by the principal and conform to the guidelines. Second grade has not changed much." One FSC interviewed in 1995 indicated the effect of time on curriculum changes. The FSC stated, "...been tremendous. I have been working on DAP since kindergarten (you have to move slowly with teachers) and finally this year DAP are being implemented using centers and workshops. Teachers have benefitted by High Scope and are looking forward to attending it again next year. Teachers have also gotten more accustomed to working with me and are more receptive."

The interview responses of FSCs in 1993 were much less positive. The FSCs either had seen no change, little change, or only more teacher awareness of DAPs. The interview responses in 1994 indicated more changes in the curriculum than in 1993 but less than was noted in 1995 and 1996.

Children's transition. FSCs have seen a continual progression toward increasingly positive relationships between school staff and SDTP staff to support transition and integrated services for children. One FSC remarked during her 1995 interview, "See a real willingness by the school staff to take advantage of what we have to offer. We have teachers no longer

in the Project that still want to attend things like High Scope. The kindergarten teacher has continued several things that were started by the Project... she was using DAP before the Project but added a few things." Regarding integrated services for children, one FSC commented, "Slow but we have made progress. We have made their work load easier through being a liaison to the families... things they do not have time for. Principal relies on advice from us a lot."

FSCs were asked during interviews what had been done to help children's transition. Responses in 1995 varied. Students in some schools visited the next higher grade in the spring, while students in a different school visited the next higher grade plus did an art project. Students attending one of the other schools visited the next higher grade in the spring and interacted with the older students through various activities such as eating lunch with the "big kids." One FSC added that the children were helped in their transition indirectly though their parents talking to up-coming teachers at a SDTP spring parent meeting.

Transition activities in 1993 and 1994 were more involved than in 1995 and 1996. The activities consisted of having the Head Start children visit kindergarten in 1993, and in 1994 the kindergarten children who attended for only a half-day were allowed to visit for a whole day. Transition activities in 1995 and 1996 varied among SDTP demonstration schools. Most SDTP demonstration classrooms had classroom visitation in the next

higher grade. The students from the lower grade were paired with students from the higher grade and worked on an art project.

The FSCs have remained involved in kindergarten visitation and have accomplished a great amount in some towns. One of the triumphs was having all the pre-school children in one town, not just the Head Start children, visit school. Another triumph in several towns was having the Head Start children visit the school in the spring that they were going to attend in the fall. In the past, the Head Start children all visited one certain elementary school for transition day.

Parent involvement. Demonstration teachers and principals have noted a number of positive effects of SDTP and FSC services. Parent involvement has increased in most of the SDTP demonstration schools. One principal reported during an interview in 1995:

> With the combination of Transition Project and a school-wide effort, involvement has increased both inside and outside the school. ...teachers invite the parents in and the school invites them to come anytime. The most successful thing was to invite the parents in for lunch. ...parents came by the basketfuls. At the beginning of the year I always send a note home asking parents where they want to volunteer and teachers use that list throughout the year.

Involvement has not only increased in most of the SDTP demonstration schools, but it has also been defined differently by the schools. Parents are utilized by two demonstration

schools as "teacher volunteers," which represents a change from the way they were utilized before the SDTP was implemented. An interview of a parent in 1995 demonstrates how she feels about her involvement in the classroom and how her relationship with the teachers has changed:

> Gotten to know the teacher better too... You are in the room helping them and then they've asked me to help with other things. You develop a better relationship with them. Talk to them more outside the school too. It's probably more child related, but it is better than it has been before. Then [before SDTP implementation] you were just another parent... They never had a volunteer program here until two years ago. They didn't even like parents coming into the school. I have always volunteered, but think I volunteer more because I am in the classroom now. Before that they just had you cut paper. Now you get to do better things...

Parent involvement, according to 1995 and 1996 FSC interview responses, has increased to some degree in all except one of the SDTP demonstration schools. Responses of the FSCs in 1993 indicated that there was little involvement in the classrooms, and in 1994 and 1996 responses indicated increased levels of parent involvement. Teachers at one SDTP demonstration school have begun utilizing parents weekly as "extra pairs of hands" for the workshops/centers that the teachers have set up in their classrooms. A FSC who remarked about the effect of the SDTP on

parent involvement in the classrooms stated, "Fantastic... parents come in and help with snacks and centers, are governing board members, are involved in the volunteer banquet, help in the school with reading and other activities, and come in and eat with their kids..."

There is considerable difference between the amount of parent involvement in SDTP demonstration and comparison schools. Parent involvement in the comparison schools varied among and within schools, as it did in demonstration schools. Most of the comparison schools, however, noted little parent involvement in the classrooms. It is interesting to note how parent involvement was defined by the parents in the comparison schools. Parents in comparison schools considered themselves involved in the schools if they had attended conferences once or twice a year and yearly Christmas programs. Few parents in comparison schools actually assisted in the classrooms. A FSC journal offered insight into parent involvement, "Teachers are working more with parents... they are realizing they should keep parents more informed... I think parents are less frightened to come into the school... the more they come in, the more comfortable they become."

Changes in how schools handle children. The FSCs interviewed in 1993 were either not sure the schools handled children differently or felt that communication had opened up between school and home. The FSCs interviewed in 1994, 1995, and 1996 have seen a definite change in the ways schools handle children. SDTP demonstration schools have begun to view the

"whole child," because schools are now more informed of the home environment. The "whole child" view of children has helped the SDTP demonstration schools make better decisions regarding the children.

Many of the SDTP demonstration schools did not have a Transition Day before implementation of the SDTP. Thanks to the efforts of the FSCs, all of the SDTP schools have added Transition Days.

One SDTP demonstration school has also changed admission procedures for pre-school children. In the past, the school used formal kindergarten screenings to decide whether the children were ready for school or not. The school presently uses a in-formal method called a Kindergarten Tea. The pre-school children and their parents are invited into the school at the Kindergarten Tea to acquaint themselves with the school. Teachers and FSCs assist in the in-formal process of screening through observations of the children.

Improved home/school communication. In all four data collection years, one of the most valuable aspects of the FSC role to principals and teachers at SDTP demonstration schools has been that of a liaison between school and home. FSCs have provided the communication link that was often lacking between families and schools. According to a principal interviewed in 1994, "Sometimes the parents are more receptive at taking the advice from the FSCs rather than from me. They are in the home." A principal interviewed in 1996 stated, "Parents know us better,

which is positive for parents... better communication and more interaction [with parents] than there would be otherwise. They know me better because of the FSCs.

A teacher interviewed in 1994 suggested that because of the improved communication between school and home her relationship with parents has improved (Allen, 1994). The teacher stated:

> I feel that I have a better relationship with the families than ever. I have only visited the families before the kids start school but then don't see them until conferences. This way they [parents] are visited monthly, and the parents are more aware of how the children are doing in school. They [parents] seem to speak to me more readily or else they ask the FSC and she asks me. The communication is definitely more open.

Effect of SDTP on families.

The FSCs seem to have realized some of the fruits of their labors in 1995 and 1996. One FSC stated that one of the effects of SDTP services is that, "Certain families have become more self-sufficient... Families have looked to the communities for services... may not have done so in the past." FSCs have also discovered that following non-Head Start families is important because, according to one FSC, "They are the ones that are likely to fall through the cracks because of not having needs identified or knowing what is out there." Other FSCs noted that their families have become empowered. The SDTP actually has been able to help many low needs families. The families have not had to

encounter as many difficulties because they did not know where to turn. The journal of a FSC provided an example, "One parent needed to go to work and had no idea of who to contact for finding a baby-sitter... One family's income was too high for welfare but was not high enough to pay for the testing that was to be done. The Project was able to pay for it for them."

A teacher at a SDTP demonstration school who was interviewed in 1996 stressed the importance of the SDTP to children. The teacher stated, "Program [SDTP] has helped children's health and self-esteem... and parents feel like we care more about the children rather than just how they are doing in school."

Suggestions for Project

FSCs were asked on the interview protocols what changes they would like to see made in the SDTP and if they had any additional comments about the SDTP. Interview responses of the FSCs in 1995 included extending the SDTP for an additional twelve years, including all the schools in the SDTP, dropping the low needs families from the SDTP, and dropping families from the SDTP that did not really want to be in the SDTP.

Responses from FSCs in 1994 were similar to the 1995 and 1996 interview responses, with the addition of wishing low needs families could be dropped from the monthly visitation regimen and wishing for better coordination between agencies.

FSCs were asked what additional forms of support they needed to help families. One FSC noted in a 1995 interview, "We could use a budget for school supplies, winter coats, or other things

that can not be accessed through the community." Other FSCs stated similar remarks about needing increased funding. A FSC said, "More support from state, federal, and local government... money. Ideally it would be wonderful to be under the school's umbrella." Additional support FSCs wanted in 1994 included increased funding, more community support, and more workshops.

Conclusions

Children and families at SDTP demonstration sites have been the indirect and direct beneficiaries of successful SDTP implementation. Implementation has in large part been due to the persistent efforts and professional behavior of the very caring FSCs. Direct benefits to children include a daily milk break in school, routine medical and dental care, follow-up medical and dental care, and participation in nutrition activities in the classroom. More importantly, the children have had in the FSCs personal advocates who have not only tended to the needs of the children and families but have also developed and enhanced home-school communication.

Indirect benefits to children at SDTP demonstration sites include the following direct benefits for their parents, (1) parenting skills and practices learned through SDTP parenting classes, (2) parental support network which was developed through parent attendance at SDTP meetings and parenting classes, (3) parent empowerment through acquisition of resources, involvement in the schools and communities, participation on the SDTP

advisory board and governing board, and involvement as local SDTP site officers.

As noted earlier, home-school communication is an important factor in the academic success of children (Bianchi, 1984; Vickers, 1994). Since parents' educational attainment influences the manner in which parents communicate with teachers, gaps in communication patterns can adversely effect parent-teacher communication (Vacha & McLaughlin, 1992; Vickers, 1994). In like manner, schools sometimes inappropriately assume parents will understand their messages which also adversely effects parent-teacher communication (Vickers, 1994). Vickers stated that educators are often unaware of how families differ in their interpretations and responses to school communications (1994). Vickers added that parents are not apt to call the school to ask for clarification of the school communication materials (1994). A link, such as SDTP family service coordinators, can bridge the communication gap between home and school. Improved home-school communication can enhance children's success in school, improve the life chances of children and empower parents. The present study identified improved home-school communication as one of the most successful outcomes of the SDTP.

Significance of Study

The present study addressed the comprehensive early-education intervention efforts of the SDTP. The SDTP is an attempt to improve the life chances for children through improving their home and school environments. Family service

coordinators in the SDTP have been successful in assisting families and schools.

An ethnographic study is a unique approach to educational evaluation but can be quite useful in its description of changes in the classroom and the effect of those changes on the community (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). While the approach may be unique, ethnography's holistic view (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is compatible with Head Start's holistic approach to families.

Learning how families interact with schools and how families perceive their schools is fundamentally important to policy makers as well as practitioners. Comprehensive changes in American education can not be successfully accomplished unless the relationship between the schools, communities, and families is fully understood. The present study will serve to enlighten policy makers by providing insights into the school-family-community relationship, and the documentation and description of changes within SDTP classrooms will serve practitioners.

The present study will also contribute to the literature on schools, families, and communities. The effects of the services provided by family service coordinators to families and schools will be of particular interest. The generalization of research results, often not the goal of ethnography (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1992; Spradley, 1979, 1980), has been enhanced in this study through random selection of demonstration schools, utilization of comparison schools,

utilization of multi-sites, and triangulation of research data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Suggestions for Future Research

Quantitative and qualitative researchers should further investigate the relationships between home, school, and family that were identified in the present study. The effect of the relationships on the success of at-risk children is another useful dimension.

Ethnographic research provides an excellent mechanism for understanding the effect of school reform on schools and communities. The close relationship of communities and schools can best be understood in their natural environment. Future educational researchers should consider utilizing the "natural" approach of ethnography.

The use of a computer program in qualitative data management has been a useful experience. The ethnographer gained considerable insight into the use of computers and computer programs throughout the study and recommends both to qualitative researchers.

The paper herein represents the combined efforts of two researchers and a practitioner. The multi-disciplinary approach facilitated theory building and the application of theory to practice. The early childhood background of the practitioner, curriculum and instruction background of the professor, and sociological background of the ethnographer represent a unique

approach to educational research. Future educational researchers should consider utilizing similar combined efforts.

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